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Stand for Children Illinois Polls: Voters Support Hybrid Chicago School Board, Republicans Drive Support for Fully Elected Board

Chicago -- Stand for Children Illinois today released poll results it commissioned among Chicago and Illinois voters to gauge support for a fully elected Chicago school board, a hybrid board split evenly between elected and appointed members, or a plan proposed by the Mayor with more appointed than elected members.

When asked if they support a fully elected 21-member school board or an evenly split hybrid school board, Chicago voters supported the hybrid board 47-32, with Illinois voters supporting the hybrid board 44-40.

Chicagoans, Black voters, progressives, and Democrats all signaled a preference for a hybrid school board, with Democrats supporting it 54-35 to the fully elected board. Similarly, self-identified very liberal voters supported the hybrid model to fully elected by 53-35. Republicans, on the other hand, drove support for a fully elected board by a 46-30 margin over the hybrid alternative.

The results also showed a clear preference among Chicago voters who support other education-related issues ahead of a fully elected school board. Only 6% of Chicagoans surveyed said having a fully elected board would do the most to improve education in Chicago, well behind making schools more accountable to parents and taxpayers (18%), providing more state funding for schools (22%), and reducing class sizes (16%).

These poll results, outlined in the attached polling memo, come on the heels of Stand for Children's multi-media campaign urging legislators to find a compromise solution that puts students first and takes the best ideas from both sides of the debate.

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Stand for Children Illinois is a non-partisan education advocacy organization that fights for educational equity. Stand partners with parents to support their education journey and become strong advocates, and it advocates for proven policies and funding so that all students receive a high-quality, relevant education.

May 15, 2021

To: Interested Parties
Fr: Brian Stryker / Oren Savir
Re: Illinois and Chicago Poll Findings

Illinois and Chicago voters like a hybrid elected/appointed school board, with Democrats and Independents preferring it while the anti-Chicago Republican base prefers a fully-elected board. Voters prefer that, instead of setting an automatic transition to a fully-elected board from a hybrid board, there's either a) an independent audit to determine schools are financially stable and independent or b) the legislature revisits the issue after a few years to see how the hybrid approach is working.

Key Findings:

- Illinois and Chicago voters prefer a hybrid board over the fully-elected option.** Informed that legislators in Springfield have put together a hybrid school board plan, a plurality of voters actually prefer the hybrid option to the fully-elected board:

Legislators in Springfield have proposed a compromise, hybrid Chicago school board with five members elected by voters and five appointed by the Mayor, with the Mayor breaking any ties. They say this compromise goes farther than the Mayor's proposal in giving voters a say, but it maintains the good progress Chicago schools have made while ensuring financial accountability and transparency as well as adequate funding. Knowing this, which of these proposals do you prefer for the Chicago School Board?

% Favor	Illinois	Chicago
A new fully-elected twenty-one member school board.	40	32
A hybrid ten-member school board with five members elected by voters and five appointed by the Mayor	44	47
An eleven-member school board with three members elected by voters and eight appointed by the Mayor.	9	16

- Democrats, Chicagoans, African Americans, and progressives prefer a hybrid board, while support for a fully-elected board is driven by Republicans.** Democrats, self-identified very liberal voters, and Independents all favor a hybrid plan, while Republicans prefer an elected board:

Legislators in Springfield have proposed a compromise, hybrid Chicago school board with five members elected by voters and five appointed by the Mayor, with the Mayor breaking any ties. They say this compromise goes farther than the Mayor's proposal in giving voters a say, but it maintains the good progress Chicago schools have made while ensuring financial accountability and transparency as well as adequate funding.

Knowing this, which of these proposals do you prefer for the Chicago School Board?

<i>% Prefer</i>	A fully-elected 21-member board	A hybrid board with 5 elected by voters and 5 appointed by Mayor
Total	40	44
Democrats	35	54
Republicans	46	30
Very liberal	35	53
Chicagoans	32	47

- Voters who don't want a fully-elected board right now also don't want one automatically created in a few years.** Voters want another check to make sure the fully-elected board is right for Chicago, whether that be the legislature taking time to see how the hybrid board works or a hybrid board only created if an audit shows the district is financially stable and independent. Republicans narrowly favor an automatic transition while Democrats, Chicagoans, and African Americans are opposed.

Assuming a hybrid school board was implemented with five members elected and five appointed, which of the following would you agree with more as a plan to transition to a fully-elected board, even if neither is exactly right?

<i>% Prefer</i>	Total
<i>It should happen automatically after 4 years.</i>	38%
<i>Elected leaders should give the hybrid board a chance to work for a few years, and then see if the time is right to transition to a fully-elected board.</i>	49%
<i>Don't know</i>	12%

Assuming a hybrid school board was implemented with five members elected and five appointed, which of the following would you agree with more as a plan to transition to a fully-elected board, even if neither is exactly right?

<i>% Prefer</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>It should happen automatically after 4 years.</i>	34%
<i>It should happen after independent auditors confirm the school system is made financially stable and financially independent of the city.</i>	54%
<i>Don't know</i>	11%

- Creating a fully-elected board on any timeline opens Democrats to tax-and-spend hits in the suburbs and Downstate.** The electoral risk for Democrats to legislating a fully-elected board comes in suburban and Downstate when voters hear about this as a bailout to Chicago. The following were the most damaging hits about a fully-elected board, which were tested in context of a fully-elected board created now but would still pass a fact check against a hybrid board with an automatic transition to a fully-elected board:

 - [TAX/SPEND]** “If we give the school board a blank check to tax and spend with no oversight, it’s only a matter of time before they run up billions more in debt and ask for yet another bailout from the state. That will mean Illinois taxpayers have to pay yet again for Chicago schools’ corruption and wasteful spending.” (44% very convincing among Independents)
 - [TOO MUCH GOVERNMENT / WASTE]** “Illinois and Chicago already have too many layers of government. We need to reduce government, not add yet another bureaucracy that taxpayers will have to pay for.” (39% very convincing among Independents)
- Even among education-related issues, creating a fully-elected Chicago school board is a low priority for Chicago voters.** Presented with a list of education-related policies, only 6% of Chicagoans say having a fully-elected school board would do the most to improve education in Chicago. This is well behind making schools more accountable to parents and taxpayers (18%), providing more state funding for schools (22%), and reducing class sizes (16%).

The following findings are based on the results of three surveys:

- An online survey from May 11-13, 2021 in Illinois among N=500 likely 2022 general election voters, with an n=200 Chicago oversample (margin of error of $\pm 4.4\%$)
- A phone and text survey from April 28 – May 6, 2021 in Illinois among N=600 likely 2022 general election voters, with an n=400 Chicago oversample (margin of error of $\pm 3.5\%$)
- A phone and text survey from February 23 – March 1, 2021 in Illinois among N=600 likely 2022 general election voters, with an n=400 Chicago oversample (margin of error of $\pm 3.5\%$)